FLIGHT DECK

Critique Analysis

SERVING POWER

★★★★★

Critical Analysis

Reading Serving Power, I felt an unsettling, slow-burn unease that stayed with me long after the final pages. This is not a screenplay that shocks through spectacle or overt brutality; instead, Paul Thornhill builds a world where fear operates quietly, politely, and with a smile. What makes the script so effective is its restraint. Power does not arrive with tanks or sirens—it arrives with procedures, language, wellness, and reassurance. That choice alone places Serving Power firmly in the lineage of the most psychologically incisive political thrillers, where the true horror is how

reasonable everything seems ServingPower . At its core, this screenplay is about disappearance—not just physical disappearance, but the erasure of selfhood. Cynthia Jones begins as a woman firmly rooted in her identity: a journalist with a reputation, a voice, and a sense of professional purpose. What unfolds is not her destruction, but her gradual dilution. Her byline fades, her work is softened, her presence becomes optional, then inconvenient, then irrelevant. Thornhill captures something deeply contemporary here: the way modern systems don’t silence dissent by force, but by absorption. Truth is not banned; it is edited, reframed, deprioritized, until it no longer threatens anyone. The psychological dimension of the story is where the screenplay truly shines.

Cynthia’s struggle is not just external—it is existential. The question is never simply “Who is doing this?” but “What version of me is allowed to exist?” This is reinforced through the recurring motif of doubles and replacements. Lydia, the twin, functions less as a character and more as a living metaphor. She represents the acceptable self: the quieter version, the one who adapts, who survives by fitting into the negative space Cynthia leaves behind. Their relationship evokes a deeply human fear—the terror that someone else could step into your life, wear your face, and do it better, or at least more compliantly. The candy imagery is especially disturbing in its elegance. Candy is pleasure, comfort, childhood reward—something harmless, even joyful. By tying this symbol to

control, compliance, and transformation, the script suggests that coercion no longer needs to hurt to be effective. It just needs to feel good. The wrappers, their crinkling sound, their bright colors, recur like a Pavlovian trigger. Each appearance reinforces the idea that submission is sweetened, packaged, and sold back to us as care. The Wicked Treats factory is not merely a location; it is a thesis statement. This is power that feeds you, rewards you, and quietly rewrites you while you chew. Another striking element is how isolation is portrayed. Cynthia is surrounded by people at all times—coworkers, editors, sources, family—yet she becomes increasingly alone. The script understands something painfully real about institutional gaslighting: it works best

when no single moment feels dramatic enough to protest. Each small denial of access, each subtle correction of her narrative, feels plausibly bureaucratic. The cumulative effect, however, is annihilating. By the time Cynthia realizes what is happening, her social, financial, and professional anchors have already dissolved. What I found most haunting is the screenplay's refusal to offer catharsis in the traditional sense. Even moments of resistance are immediately neutralized, absorbed, or reframed as success. Awards are given. Applause continues. The system congratulates itself. Thornhill seems less interested in victory than in testimony. Serving Power feels like a warning written from inside the machine, not outside it. It asks the viewer to sit with discomfort,

to recognize complicity, and to question how often comfort has already been chosen over truth. Ultimately, Serving Power is not about a future dystopia. That's what makes it so effective—and so frightening. It feels uncomfortably adjacent to the present. Its deepest psychological insight is this: freedom is rarely taken outright. It is traded, piece by piece, for safety, belonging, and ease, until one day the exchange is complete and no one remembers consenting. This screenplay doesn't tell us that power corrupts. It shows us how power serves—and how eagerly we accept the meal.